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C O N F I D E N T I A L VIENNA 001235

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR NEA, EUR/ERA, AND EUR/AGS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [KPAL](#) [KWBG](#) [IS](#) [GZ](#) [AU](#) [WB](#) [EUN](#)

SUBJECT: DEMARCHE ON BUSH-SHARON MEETING AND GAZA

DISENGAGEMENT: AUSTRIAN RESPONSE

REF: STATE 68063

Classified By: ECONOMIC-POLITICAL COUNSELOR GREGORY E. PHILLIPS

REASONS: 1.4 (B) AND (D)

1. (C) EconPolCouns and Pol Unit Chief conveyed reftel points to Austrian MFA A/S-equivalent for the Middle East and North Africa Ralph Scheide and Israel/Palestine desk officer Wolfgang Lapuh on April 14. Scheide welcomed the President's reaffirmation of the road map as the guiding document for the Middle East Peace Process. He underlined the importance of an Abbas visit to Washington, saying "Abbas needs to have something to show to his people before the July elections" in order to keep Palestinian radical groups from gaining strength. Since Gaza disengagement is "a reality in progress," Scheide continued, "the real issue is what comes next?" Scheide thought that the appointment of General Ward was a positive development, and urged even greater engagement on the part of the U.S. "The EU realizes that without the clout of the U.S., no real movement is possible."

2. (C) In an aside, Scheide asked Lapuh to update the briefing paper for Foreign Minister Plassnik for the April 15 EU Ministerial ("Gymnich") in light of our information. Scheide added that the Middle East Peace Process as such was not on the Gymnich agenda, but that Foreign Ministers would discuss EU relations with Arab countries. Scheide observed that formal EU statements following Gymnich meetings were the exception, and thought it unlikely that the EU would issue a statement on developments in Israel and Palestine on this occasion.
Brown